

Council to add \$1.3M to human services budget

■ Greater need expected for programs that run on a 'shoestring'

The Montgomery County Council plans to add \$1.3 million to the county's proposed \$271.8 million Health and Human Services budget.

County Executive — Isiah Leggett's proposed budget for fis-

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cal 2009 of \$271.8 million is about 3.5 percent higher than fiscal 2008's \$262.7 million.

But council members say that the budget still does not provide for all of the needs of the county's poorest, said Councilman George Leventhal, chairman of the Health and Human Services committee.

"As we face difficult economic times there is going to be a growing need to fund additional programs," said Councilwoman Duchy Trachtenberg (D-At large) of North Bethesda.

Leventhal said the committee tried to add more funding where it was most needed.

"These are under-funded shoestring operations," Leventhal said of the health clinics. "We're putting money into bricks and mortar...but we also need to acknowledge the need for staff."

But overall the Montgomery Cares program, which provides funding to the clinics, will see a \$710,730 reduction in mental health and oral health programs, said Leventhal (D-At large) of Takoma Park.

The health department is to report back if clinics are forced to turn people away if a lack of funds, he said.

Last year the Montgomery Cares program served about 19,000 people.

The committee also recommended putting in additional funds of \$215,000 to keep service at the Avery Road Treatment Center at its current level. The county also is cutting \$50,000 from a program to help obese children and \$178,000 for two community nurse positions.

"We have no problem with the programs," Leggett's spokesman Patrick K. Lacefield said. "The only question that remains is the council has to match resources with what [they expect to spend]. We've got to see how it comes out in the end."

Cavalier cancels expansion plan

Cable company Cavalier has withdrawn its plan to expand its service into Montgomery County.

The council had introduced a resolution on Jan. 15 approving Cavalier's franchise request.

But at the Feb. 5 public hearing, the company announced it had put its expansion plans on hold because it does not yet have the technology to offer high-definition television service or digital video recorders.

The council voted Tuesday to deny a franchise agreement to Cavalier since it had withdrawn its application; the decision does not prohibit the company from applying again in the future.

County will study speed cameras

The Montgomery County Office of Legislative Oversight released a 35-page plan Tuesday on how it plans to evaluate and report to the state legislature about the speed cameras.

As part of the January 2006 law authorizing speed cameras in the county, the state also required the County Council to report back on their effectiveness in cutting down speeding and improving traffic safety, said Councilman Philip M. Andrews (D-Dist. 1) of Gaithersburg, chairman of the Public Safety Committee.

The county has until Dec. 31, 2009 to report back to the General Assembly. On Tuesday, the Office of Legislative Oversight's memo described how it plans to try to measure the results, including a before and after comparison of streets where the cameras were installed. Police with radar detectors had measured the number of speeding cars on the streets before the cameras were installed.